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PAINTED SEPULCHRAL STELAI FROM ALEXANDRIA.

[PLATE XVII.]

Sepulchral stelai with various representations sculptured in relief have been recovered from ancient sites in such numbers that there is scarcely a collection of importance which does not possess examples: but, from the nature of the case, it is hardly to be expected that similar painted representations would descend to us in equal numbers, even if they had ever been employed with the same frequency. Painting is too evanescent to become a favorite where a lasting memorial is desired, unless it be used as mere decoration for sculpture, as we know was often the case. It is conjectured that the Attic stele of Aristion originally had a scene painted below the carved figure of the warrior; but the conjecture rests wholly upon the similarity presented by the Lyseas stele, found in its immediate neighborhood, upon which both the standing figure and the galloping horse below were simply painted: their presence was not even suspected till some time after the stele had been unearthed, when they gradually made their appearance under Loeschcke's persistent and well-directed efforts. The rarity of these paintings from Attika may be seen from the fact that in 1884 M. Pottier could refer to no more than 18 upon stelai and funerary urns (*Bull. Cor. Hellén.* No. 8, p. 459; cf. *Mitth. des arch. Inst. Athen.* IV, p. 36 seq.; V, p. 164 seq.; X, pp. 238-50, 328-33). Of these, only two or three belonged to the sixth century, the others to the fourth, or later.

The interest that is naturally excited by objects so few of which are known, has led me to make known to archæologists a series of stelai which do not possess the value of Attic origin, it is true, but are, nevertheless, of considerable importance from the place and period to which they belong, and from the nature of their discovery.

In an article published in the first number of this Journal (vol. 1, p. 18), under the title of *Inscribed Sepulchral Vases from Alexandria*, I described a tomb found among others at a depth of twenty to thirty

feet beneath the surface, near the sea, about a mile east of the present limits of Alexandria, Egypt. These tombs were "partly cut in the solid rock, partly built up. One that was discovered about a year ago had a rock-chamber 12 to 14 feet square, and contained as many as fifty vases, about thirty of which were in a good state of preservation and bore a few inscriptions. Beside the vases, this tomb contained also 'a number of tablets, with paintings badly preserved, and a few inscriptions.' These inscriptions are Greek. Nothing was found in the vases but ashes and small pieces of charred bones, and they were all tightly sealed with plaster when found. These vases are said to be of a poorer quality than those of the Pugioli collection. They are in this country, but still unpacked and I have not been able to see them. In July, 1883, in another tomb at the distance of a few rods from this tomb a vase was found containing a hoard of over 200 silver coins, all of which are declared to belong to the period of Ptolemy Soter and the early part of the reign of Philadelphos, according to the classification made by Mr. R. S. Poole of the British Museum."

A large number of these coins, as well as the contents of the tomb described, were secured at the time by Hon. E. E. Farman, for several years American Consul-General in Egypt, who visited the tomb, saw many of the objects removed, and brought the most important of them to this country. His large collection of coins, Egyptian bronzes and scarabs, together with six of the painted tablets above referred to, have been loaned to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and have been on exhibition there for some time. Other painted stelai, beside these six, were found disposed about the wall of the tomb, but their condition was so bad that it was thought not worth while to transport them hither. The six are of a lightish-yellow, fine-grained, calcareous stone, closely resembling that from Kypros. Their front surfaces are rather carefully smoothed, but all the others are roughly chiselled into shape, as if they were intended to be set against a wall, as they were found. In shape they resemble the ordinary sepulchral stelai, that of the Attic Hegeso for instance, with pillared front, architrave, pediment and three akroteria. Five out of the six bear inscriptions; one shows no trace of any. Of three of these inscriptions enough remains to show that there were apparently buried here at least three members of a corps of Galatian mercenaries, in the service of the Ptolemies, who occupied, with their families, a part of this Eastern nekropolis, which was devoted to them and similar military corps.

The names would indicate a mixed origin. The period to which the tomb belongs should not be far from that of its near neighbor where the hoard of coins was found; it probably was of the first half of the third century B. C., an attribution sustained by the forms of the letters (*A. J. A.*, vol. I, p. 31). Whatever Egyptian element there may have been in this group, the art and accessories of the stelai are Greek. It is not high art, it is true, and the general effect is greatly marred by time and accident; but there are some evidences of good drawing and fine characterization. The colors are in part fairly preserved, with some evident fading in the lighter shades, especially the blues. As in the case of the painted vases described in the article referred to above (*A. J. A.*, vol. I, p. 19), the colors are laid on a stucco-ground with which the stone is covered for the purpose, and in general the same methods may be said to have been employed in both. The stelai may be described as follows:—

I.—(PL. XVII) The outside measurements are,—width, 10 ins.; height, 15; thickness, about 3; panel within, 8 to $7\frac{1}{4}$ by 10, sunk $\frac{1}{2}$ in. The space at top between the akroteria is sunk $\frac{1}{2}$ in., the rest is left uncut. The pediment is painted red, the geison with a rough ornament of red and chocolate. The architrave bears a single line of inscription in red:

..... Λ Α Ξ Η C

Within the panel (whose whole field is painted a dark lead color), to the right, stands a man, $8\frac{3}{4}$ ins. high, clothed in a chlamys of bright blue fastened on his right shoulder and falling below the knees. The exposed parts of the body, face, neck, right shoulder and arm, left hand, portion of right side and leg below knee, are painted a lightish-brown or flesh color; the eyes and mustache are black, as is also the hair. Paint about the head has disappeared in spots, especially in the hair, leaving bad outlines. The right hand is outstretched to receive a cup presented by a young warrior to left, $7\frac{1}{2}$ ins. high, standing with spear reaching to top of field to left, partly concealed by body. The spear is black, as likewise the hair and eyes of the warrior, whose pure Greek forehead and nose are admirably executed: the eye deserves the same encomium. The hair is short and, in the main, well defined. The exposed parts of his body are of a dark brown, many shades deeper than that of the other figure. He is clad in a chiton which appears only by a corner above and behind the knee, all the front of the body being covered by a huge oval shield resting on the ground, before his right

foot, while the upper part rests against his chest. The main body of the shield is painted a dull blue, decorated toward the upper part by three more than semicircular lines of red, and the same on the corresponding part below. The centre of the shield was yellow, and there are remains of what was probably a Gorgon-head in black. The outstretched forearm of the warrior projects beyond the edge of the shield, as he offers to the deceased a two-handled black cup with a very long stem. That the first figure is the deceased is shown by his greater stature, in accordance with the usual custom of heroising the dead, and also by the presentation of the wine-cup as an offering to the hero. The old Spartan reliefs and the Lyseas stele represent the deceased as holding the cup, with the libation just received or to be received; typical, it would seem, of the yearly offerings to the dead (*cf.* Isaïos, 2.46-7, 9.36; Gardner, "A Sepulchral Relief from Tarentum," *Journ. Hel. St.* 1884, pp. 105-42). In some of the Boiotian reliefs the libation is being poured into the cup (*op. cit.*, p. 119). It is interesting to see the present stage of the scene coming to us from Alexandria.

II.—Outside measurements, $16\frac{1}{2}$ ins. by 10; panel, sunk $\frac{1}{2}$ in., 7 to $6\frac{1}{2}$ by 7. The akroteria are cut free and painted blue; the pediment is red; the geison has a coarse ornament, as in No. I. The architrave bears two lines of inscription in red:

..... ΙCΙΔΩΡΟC
 ΓΑΛΑΤΗC

The field of the panel is painted yellow, and bears, to the right, the deceased, 6 ins. high, with reddish-black hair, habited in blue chlamys, as in No. I, with flesh tint of about the same shade. He reaches out his right hand and clasps that of a woman, $4\frac{1}{2}$ ins. high, whose hair and eyes are reddish-black, the hair reaching to her shoulders. The front of her garment is of a dark brown, but on her right the arm and garment to feet are of a roseate pink. Behind her is a woman, of nearly the same height, extending her right hand upward toward the deceased, in farewell. Her hair and eyes resemble those of the first woman, her dress from neck to feet is pink, with a wide stripe of light blue from the girdled waist to the knees, and with brown stripes below and in front. Some long lines in blue and brown, above the heads of the women, may be shaped, dubiously, into ΙΑΙ, the barbarous exclamation of sorrow in Soph. Fr. 54. The whole work is coarse and careless, but there is some spirit and even expression in the face of the second woman, while the faces of the others are badly injured.

III.—This measures, outside, 16 ins. by $11\frac{1}{4}$ to $10\frac{3}{4}$: the akroteria are merely blocked out, as in No. I, and painted blue; the pediment is red. The architrave bears one line of inscription in red, completely preserved:

ΒΙΤΟΣ ΛΟΚΤΟΙΕΚΟΓΑΛΑΤΗΣ

Βίτος Λόστοιεκ ὁ Γαλάτης

Upon the yellow ground of the panel is represented the single figure of a warrior, so badly preserved that it is difficult to make out all the details, but he seems to be standing "at rest," holding erect, in his right hand, a long spear, resting it on the ground, and with his left hand his oval shield in like position, upright and free from his body, with the edge toward the spectator. The shield, as in No. I, reaches as high as his neck. The size of these shields is noticeable. The head of the warrior is badly injured, but there are some remains of brownish hair. His chlamys is blue; and the flesh is rather brown.

IV.—This stele measures 16 by $10\frac{1}{2}$ ins.: its pediment has a cornice and mouldings wider than the preceding, but otherwise is similar in form and decoration. The architrave exhibits some faint traces of letters, but not enough to form into words. The main part of the pinkish ground of the panel is occupied to the left by a reddish-brown unbridled horse, which has thrown up its head and the fore part of its body, as if to free itself from the grasp of a man in front who has his left arm thrown around the neck of the horse, and his right hand lifted to seize him by the nostril. The horse stands $4\frac{3}{4}$ ins. high at hip, and is $7\frac{1}{2}$ long to tip of nose. The man, $6\frac{3}{4}$ ins. high, is youthful, clad in a short chiton of yellowish-white material, girded with a dark sash in which is stuck what appears to be a knife or stick, and on his head, over reddish-brown hair, he wears a rounded conical hat. His flesh tint is swarthy, but not so dark as that of the cup-bearer in No. I. His profile, neck, and general attitude are excellent. Behind him stands a smaller male figure, $5\frac{1}{2}$ ins. high, clad in a similar chiton, looking at the scene before him: his hair is blacker than that of the other. The attitude of the horse is very lifelike, and the head is drawn with much spirit: the ears are laid back, and the eye shoots out a vicious fire. One is reminded of the Alexandrian horse described by Theokritos in the *Adoniazousai* (xv. 53), ὀρθὸς ἀνέστα ὁ πυρρὸς· ἰδ' ὡς ἄγριος.

V.—The measurements are $29\frac{1}{2}$ ins. by 19, and 5 ins. thick. This stele differs from all the others in having 4 ins. of the lower end cut down to fit into some support which should hold it upright. The colors

of the upper parts resemble those of the other stelai. On the architrave the remains of an inscription are still visible:

..... ΘΑΥ

The panel presents a scene of *δεξιωσις* including three persons. On the right stands a woman, $11\frac{3}{4}$ ins. high, whose hair is black and short, but whose skin is of a light lemon color—lighter than any others in the series. A white garment falls with graceful sweep from shoulder to ankle, leaving the right arm bare, as also the left from the elbow, which rests in the folds of the mantle: her shoes are red. She extends her right hand and clasps that of a person seated on a chair without a back, whose height, as seated, is 10 ins. The hair of this second figure (or rather the space where the hair was) is a bright blue, the lips and ears red, the skin a light brown. A straw-colored garment covers the body from the neck to below the knee. The feet rest on a stool decorated with red, and some pink appears on the seat, behind which stands a third figure, $11\frac{1}{2}$ ins. high, with right hand resting on the side of the sitting figure. The head has been badly rubbed away, and the surface of the stone destroyed. The right arm, much of the shoulder and breast, and the lower legs are exposed, showing a brownish skin: the garment is dark purple. In this stele alone does the ground of the panel exhibit two colors: all about the first figure, as far out as her extended arm reaches, it is of a deep lilac tint; the rest is very much lighter. From their garments, figures 2 and 3 would seem to be men.

VI.—This stele is 29 ins. by $16\frac{1}{2}$. It has no inscription visible, and is the only one in which the columns have any capitals: they are here painted red, with a band of blue, an inch wide, below. The background of the panel is of a bluish tint. The scene consists of three figures. The central figure is apparently a woman, $10\frac{1}{2}$ ins. high, as seated, facing to the left. Her body is wholly supported by an attendant, who stands behind, and her left arm hangs limp and powerless by her side, as if in the throes of death, with only enough strength remaining to clasp the hand of a figure standing before her. Her proportions are full and massive, and her body, naked to the groin, has indications of full breasts. Much of the scene is sadly blurred, but it appears to me to represent death in childbirth. Her skin is of a lightish flesh tint: about her hips rests a light lilac garment, and over her knees a reddish one: her shoes are black. Only dim features of the head can be distinguished. The attendant behind her, 10 ins. high,

has black hair, and a dark garment extending to the waist: below the girdle the white chiton is disclosed in a broad stripe, like an apron. The third figure, in front, 11 ins. high, is too badly injured to be described further than as wearing a light-brown garment.

The Museum of the Louvre contains three similar stelai, in the room devoted to Pompeian frescos. They are from Sidon, and have been described by Clermont-Ganneau, *Stèles peintes de Sidon* (*Gazette Archéologique*, III. 1877, pp. 102–115). In all the technique of manufacture they resemble ours closely, but they are coarser and less Greek, especially in the pedimental structure. They are supposed to belong to the Roman period. A few others found at Sidon are figured by Renan, *Mission de Phénicie* (p. 380, pl. XLIII).

Of the vases above mentioned as belonging to the Alexandrian tomb, those that were inscribed appear to have been broken into fragments, and I can only give the following as copied by Signor Pugioli in Alexandria:

ΘΗΡΑΙΑΣ	ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΣ	ΑΠΟΛ
ΘΗΡΑΙΟΣ	ΜΑΚΕΔΩΝ	ΛΩΝ
ΠΕΡΙΣΤΕΡΑ		

It is easy to see that the tombs in which these stelai were found are those of Greek mercenaries in the service of the Ptolemies, and their families. The men represented in the paintings are warriors, and the tombs are to the east of the city, where the foreign garrison was placed. In this case, the deceased were Galatians, as we see from the inscriptions, and, as the Galatian corps was especially numerous in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphos, this fact would seem to confirm the inference drawn from the coins as to the age of the tombs. This group would then be slightly earlier than the hypogeum whose inscriptions are given in the last number of the *Revue Archéologique*¹ by Neroutsos-Bey: the latter belong also to the Greek mercenaries, especially Kretans, and date from the close of the third and the first half of the second century B. C. From the slight indications in the *Revue Archéologique*, it would seem that several of the stelai, on which are the inscriptions there published, were painted like those here illustrated.

¹ Mai-Juin, 1887: M. NEROUTSOS-BEY, *Inscriptions Grecques et Latines recueillies dans la ville d'Alexandrie et aux environs*.

NOTE.—I take advantage of the opportunity to correct a statement made in the article on *Inscribed. Sepulchral Vases from Alexandria* in this Journal (vol. I, p. 19). In speaking of the painted vases, I said, "Another bears a Medusa's head with wriggling snakes, supported on the left by a helmet with eagle's head as crest, on the right by a cuirass." For "eagle's" head, read *griffin's*, which it undoubtedly is. In this respect, the helmet resembles that of the tetradrachms of Philip V of Makedon (Baumeister, *Denkmäler*, p. 952, *Abb.* 1102), but otherwise it is differently shaped and is not winged. The Medusa-head and griffin doubtless refer to the descent from Perseus, claimed by the Makedonian royal family. I observe that Mr. Head, in his *Historia Numorum* (London, 1887, p. 205), describes the helmet of the Philipian coin as "ending at top in eagle's head." But the hornlike projections of the head, on the coin as well as the vase, are too prominent for the eagle.

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PAINTED SEPULCHRAL STELE FROM ALEXANDRIA,
IN THE COLLECTION OF E. E. FARMAN.